

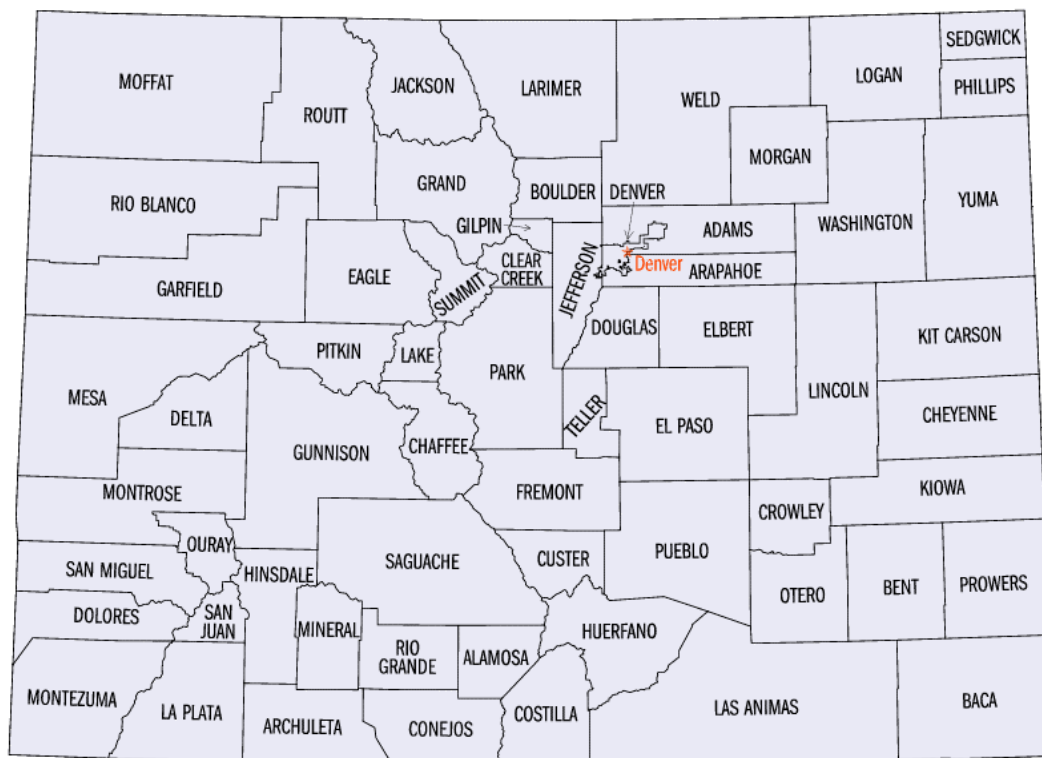
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse

Denver, Colorado

Profile of Drug Indicators

March 2003



ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse staff compiled this profile by using the most recent data available from open sources. The data presented are as accurate as the sources from which they were drawn. The information contained in this profile should not be used to rank or compare States or jurisdictions, due to differences in data collection and reporting methods.

Denver, Colorado

The following profile contains information on demographics, political figures, programs, crime, drug use, drug trafficking, and enforcement statistics.

Demographics¹

- Population (2000): 554,636
- Race/ethnicity: 51.9% white; 10.8% black/African American; 0.7% American Indian and Alaska Native; 2.7% Asian; 0.1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; 0.2% some other race; 1.9% two or more races; 31.7% Hispanic origin (all races).
- The city of Denver is located in Denver County.

Political

- Mayor: Wellington E. Webb²
- City Council (Districts 1-11, respectively): Dennis Gallagher, Ted Hackworth, Ramona Martinez, Joyce Foster, Polly Flobeck, Charlie Brown, Kathleen Mackenzie, Elbra Wedgeworth, Deborah Ortega, Ed Thomas, Happy Haynes, (At-Large: Susan Barnes-Gelt, Cathy Reynolds).³
- Denver Chief of Police: Gerald R. Whitman⁴
- Denver Manager of Safety (Sheriff): Tracy Howard⁵

Programs/Initiatives

- High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)⁶
The Rocky Mountain HIDTA was designated in 1996 and is responsible for areas in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. In Colorado, this HIDTA is responsible for the following areas/counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, Eagle, El Paso, Garfield, Grand, Jefferson, LaPlata, Larimer, Pueblo, Mesa, Moffat, Routt, and Weld.
- Denver Drug Strategy Coordinator's Office⁷
Created in August 2000, this office works to help serve the residents of Denver and to offer resources on substance abuse and addiction. The primary focus of the office is to educate the community in the areas of substance abuse and addiction, prevention, intervention, treatment, transition and recovery.
- Denver Demand Treatment⁸
The Mayor's Office on Drug Policy along with local coalition leaders and organizations are working to expand screening, brief intervention, and referral services in the Denver Health System and other hospitals. They also monitor policy to assure support for increasing access to quality treatment.
- Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse's Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows (CASASTART)⁹
CASASTART is a school-based program geared toward elementary and middle school students who have been identified as being at a high risk for substance abuse and delinquency. Services are provided to youth to help expand their opportunities for positive interactions at school, with their friends, and in their community.

- Life Skills Training¹⁰
This substance abuse prevention program, conducted by the Denver public schools, provides upper elementary and middle school students with personal and social skills to resist peer pressure to use drugs.
- Social Norms Project¹¹
This program, conducted in Denver high schools, promotes healthy behaviors and expels misconceptions about the extent of drug use by youth.

Federal Funding

- Drug-Free Communities Support Program grantees in Denver:¹²
 - FY 2002 and FY 2001: no grantees
 - FY 2000: Connecting Colorado Prevention Coalition was awarded \$99,900.
 - FY 1999: Adolescent Counseling Exchange was awarded \$99,160.
 - FY 1998: no grantees
- FY 2001 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Discretionary Funds received in Denver:¹³
 - Center for Mental Health Services:
 - \$60,000 to Federation Family Children Mental Health. Project Period: 9/30/2001- 9/29/2004.
 - \$147,474 to Mental Health Association of Colorado. Project Period: 9/30/2001- 8/31/2002.
 - \$339,626 to Mental Health Corporation, Denver. Project Period: 9/30/2001- 9/29/2004.
 - \$1,963,794 to Colorado Mental Health Services. Project Period: 9/30/1999- 8/31/2005.
 - \$192,589 to Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Project Period: 9/30/2000-8/31/2002.
 - \$60,000 to Mental Health Ombuds Program of Colorado. Project Period: 9/30/2001-9/29/2004.
 - \$150,00 to Earth Walk. Project Period: 9/30/2001-9/29/2003.
 - \$100,000 to Colorado Mental Health Services. Project Period: 9/30/2001- 9/29/2004.
 - \$150,000 to Denver Area Youth Services. Project Period: 9/30/2001 – 9/29/2002
 - Center for Substance Abuse Prevention:
 - \$96,500 to Denver Area Youth Services. Project period 09/30/2000 - 09/29/2002.
 - \$96,500 to Mental Health Corporation of Denver (MHCD). Project Period: 09/30/2000 - 09/29/2002.
 - \$105,181 to Colorado Department of Human Services. Project Period: 09/30/1999 - 09/29/2002.
 - \$249,000 to Denver Area Youth Services (DAYS). Project Period: 09/30/1999 - 09/29/2002.
 - Center for Substance Abuse Treatment:
 - \$462,401 to Colorado Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Project Period: 9/30/1999 – 9/29/2002.

- \$495,075 to Denver Health. Project Period: 9/30/2001 – 9/29/2004.
- Executive Office for Weed and Seed¹⁴
Five sites in Denver have received Federal funding and official recognition as Weed and Seed sites: Cole, Highland, 5 Points, Capitol Hill, and Baker.
- Denver did not receive any funding through the FY 2002 Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Grant Program.¹⁵
- Denver did not receive any methamphetamine funding in 2002 from the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).¹⁶
- FY 2001 Office of Justice Programs and Community Oriented Policing Services grant amounts received by Denver recipients:¹⁷
 - \$3,571,471 in formula funds
 - \$12,211,071 in discretionary funds
- No funds were received in Denver during FY 2001 from the Housing and Urban Development Low Income Housing Drug Elimination Grant.¹⁸

Crime and Drug-Related Crime

- During 2001, there were 30,272 index offenses known to police in Denver.¹⁹ This is an increase over the 26,302 index offenses known to Denver police during 2000.²⁰ Preliminary data for 2002 show that there were 15,712 crime index offenses known to police in Denver from January to June 2002.²¹

Number of Offenses Known to Police, Denver, 2000 – June 2002

Offense	2000	2001	Jan-June 2002
Murder/non-negligent manslaughter	32	45	23
Forcible rape	296	317	153
Robbery	1,039	1,250	533
Aggravated assault	1,518	1,462	712
Burglary	4,983	5,642	2,878
Larceny-theft	12,842	14,621	7,530
Motor vehicle theft	5,592	6,935	3,883
Arson	356	345	137
Crime index total	26,302	30,272	15,712

- Data for 2001 show that 61.8% of adult male arrestees and 63.6% of adult female arrestees in Denver tested positive for drug use at the time of arrest.²²

Percent of Adult Arrestees Testing Positive for Drugs, Denver, 2001

	Males	Females
Cocaine	33.8%	45.0%
Opiates	5.2	2.4
Marijuana	40.0	33.0
Methamphetamine	3.4	4.3
Any drug	61.8	63.6
Multiple drugs	19.1	19.6

- During 2001, over fifty percent of male arrestees in Denver reported using marijuana in the past year. Among the male arrestees who reported past year use of marijuana, the average number of days the substance was used in the past month was 10.1 days²³

Past Drug Use, Adult Male Arrestees, Denver, 2001

Use	Crack Cocaine	Powder Cocaine	Marijuana	Meth-amphet.	Opiates
Past 7 days	17.1%	11.1%	40.5%	4.4%	2.8%
Past 30 days	19.3%	13.9%	45.4%	6.0%	3.5%
Past year	22.4%	19.8%	51.0%	8.4%	5.4%
Average # of days in month	6.8	4.2	10.1	7.8	9.1

- During 2001, almost fifty percent of female arrestees in Denver reported past year use of marijuana. Among the female arrestees who reported past year use of marijuana, the average number of days the substance was used in the past month was 8.3 days²⁴

Past Drug Use, Adult Female Arrestees, Denver, 2001

Use	Crack Cocaine	Powder Cocaine	Marijuana	Meth-amphet.	Opiates
Past 7 days	28.2%	8.4%	16.0%	4.8%	2.6%
Past 30 days	29.5%	11.9%	40.4%	7.0%	2.6%
Past year	33.6%	17.7%	48.3%	10.8%	4.3%
Average # of days in month	11.5	5.5	8.3	7.5	15.9

- Drug arrests more than doubled between 1991 and 1995 in Denver and peaked in 1998. Drug arrests have since declined, although the number of drug arrests in 2001 was double the number made 10 years earlier.²⁵
- Between 1996 and 2000, Denver police made drug arrests at a rate of 1,234 per 100,000 city residents (more than twice the national average). The majority of these drug arrests (93%) were for possession offenses.²⁶
- Between 1996 and 2000, nearly 1,000 violent crimes and 7,200 property crimes linked to alcohol and drugs were committed each year in Denver.²⁷
- There are nearly 10,000 gang members documented in the Denver area. These numbers continue to rise at an alarming rate with an average of 1,500 new members added each year.²⁸

Drugs

- Cocaine
Small quantities of crack cocaine are produced locally and larger quantities come preprocessed from Mexico. Users tend to be white or black and adults over age 30. Hispanic users of powder cocaine are overrepresented relative to the general population.²⁹ The ingestion of cocaine by the injecting method declined from 12.4% in 1995 to 1.6% in 1998. Injection use has since increased to 13.7% in the first half of 2001. Cocaine ingested by smoking has declined to 56.7% in the first half of 2001 from 67.2% in 1995 and 1996. Cocaine ingested by inhalation has increased from 17.6% in 1995 to 26.3% in the first half of 2001.³⁰ One rock of crack cocaine costs \$20-\$30 in

Denver. A gram of powder cocaine, ranging in purity from 30 to 90 percent, costs \$100-\$125.³¹

➤ Heroin

Mexican black tar and Mexican brown heroin are widely available in Denver. The predominate user group consists of older white males who live in the central city, although suburban user groups are emerging. The most common form of ingestion is injecting. Young adults also use heroin and do so by snorting and smoking it.³² One ounce of Mexican heroin at 40% pure typically costs \$2,000-\$3,000. One gram of heroin that is 8-64% pure costs \$100-\$150.³³

➤ Marijuana

From Fall 2001 to Spring 2002, the availability of hydroponic, BC bud, local commercial, and Mexican marijuana increased in Denver.³⁴ One ounce of commercial marijuana usually costs \$50, while Mexican commercial marijuana usually costs \$200 per ounce and local hydroponic costs between \$200 and \$400 per ounce. An ounce of BC bud can cost around \$600. Young adults are the primary selling group although an older selling group is emerging.³⁵

➤ Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is widely available in the Denver area. There has been an increase in the number of small, local methamphetamine labs in the Denver area. The number of users as well as the number of novice users has increased.³⁶ The availability of "ice," methamphetamine that is nearly 100% pure, has increased in Denver. For methamphetamine that is between 10 and 20 percent pure, users often pay \$90-\$110 per gram and \$700-\$1,200 per ounce.³⁷

➤ Club Drugs

MDMA sells for \$10-\$25 per pill in Denver. GHB and ketamine are reported to be emerging problems in the area. A capful of GHB costs \$5-\$20.³⁸ Adolescents are reportedly stealing Coricidin HBP (which contains 30 milligrams of dextromethorphan) from pharmacies and eating 6-12 pills at a time.³⁹ Raves may be phasing out and club drug use is down due to high profile deaths involving ecstasy.⁴⁰

Juveniles

- During 2000, 11.2% of juvenile male detainees and 11.5% of juvenile female detainees tested positive for methamphetamine use in Denver.⁴¹

Enforcement

- As of October 2001, there were 1,850 total law enforcement employees in Denver (1,514 officers and 336 civilians).⁴²
- The Denver Police Department estimates that almost \$108 million of its operating budget for FY 2001 was devoted to enforcement related to alcohol and illicit drugs.⁴³
- Denver Police Department, Gang Bureau⁴⁴
- The Denver Gang Bureau strives to monitor gang activity in order to prevent gang motivated crimes from occurring. When crimes do take place, the unit's intelligence database provides officers with the necessary information to identify the suspect(s) in over 72% of the cases. In 2001, officers in the gang unit were responsible for recovering 126 guns that were on the streets of Denver illegally. They also regularly seize large quantities of narcotics. An example of which is the recovery of 275 pounds

of marijuana from the Curtis Park neighborhood. The Gang Bureau detectives are also instrumental in keeping gang members imprisoned and off of the streets.

- Rocky Mountain HIDTA initiatives in Denver include:⁴⁵
 - U. S. Postal Interdiction Program – This program identifies and arrests drug traffickers using U.S. mail to distribute drugs and receive drug payments. The program consists of HIDTA K-9s and their primary jurisdiction is the Metro Denver area.
 - Rocky Mountain HIDTA Financial Task Force, Colorado – This task force, based in Denver with the U.S. Customs Service as the host agency, identifies, targets and apprehends high-level drug traffickers with an emphasis on dismantling money-laundering organizations operating in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming.
 - Front Range Task Force, Colorado – This task force, with its primary jurisdiction in the Metro Denver area, pursues investigations nationwide when necessary and targets major drug traffickers and organizations with emphasis on methamphetamine and Southwest Border ties.
 - Fugitive Location and Apprehension Group, Colorado – This task force works to locate and apprehend fugitives involved in drug trafficking, gangs, and violent crimes. The task force has primary jurisdiction in Colorado with an emphasis on the Metro Denver area.
 - Metro Gang Task Force, Colorado – This task force, with its primary jurisdiction in the Metro Denver area, focuses on illegal gangs, criminal and gang organizations that engage in violence and/or narcotic trafficking. A secondary mission is to pursue investigations to locate and target drug sources outside the Metro Denver area.

Trafficking and Seizures

- Mexican poly-drug trafficking groups control the majority of cocaine distribution through Hispanic, white, and African American distribution groups. Despite declines in crack cocaine use, supplies of the drug continue to come from street gangs in Los Angeles and Chicago.⁴⁶
- The majority of heroin sales take place in the lower downtown area of Denver. Mexican Nationals control the street level heroin market in the form of small autonomous distribution cells. Gang related crimes are associated with the sale of heroin.⁴⁷
- According to the Denver DEA, large supplies of marijuana are trafficked from Mexico by Mexican poly-drug trafficking organizations through bordering states, such as Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The marijuana is hidden in vehicles and is transported in pound to multi-pound quantities.⁴⁸
- Methamphetamine seizures in Denver almost doubled from 111 pounds in 1999 to 212 pounds in 2000.⁴⁹

Amount of Drugs Seized (in Pounds), Denver, 1999-2000

Drug Seized	1999	2000
Powder cocaine	526	244
Heroin	25	24
Methamphetamine	111	212
Marijuana	8,227	2,683

- From Fall 2001 to Spring 2002, seizures of methamphetamine lab boxes, especially in motels and hotels, have increased in Denver.⁵⁰

Courts

- **Drug Courts**
As of January 8, 2003, there was one drug court in existence for over 2 years and one that was recently implemented in Denver.⁵¹ An estimated 1,500 Denver residents participate in treatment through the Denver Drug Court each year. In 1995, 19% of participants graduated, while the remaining 81% were sent to prison. The number of participants that graduated has since increased to 75% in 2001.⁵²
- During FY 2001, Denver's City Attorney, District Attorney and County Court spent \$6.7 million on legal matters involving alcohol and drug abuse.⁵³
- Drug felony cases in Denver rose from 398 cases in 1986 to 3,107 cases in 1996. This number later declined to 2,265 in 2001.⁵⁴
- From 1994 through 1998, drug felony convictions in Denver doubled, increasing from 1,109 to 2,240. Half of all drug convictions during this period were for possession.⁵⁵
- One reason drug arrests and convictions have increased in Denver is the creation of the Denver Drug Court in 1994. The drug court provides a treatment option for persons who plead guilty or are found guilty on felony drug charges.⁵⁶

Corrections

- The Denver county jail facility has been in existence since 1956, and is the largest single county jail in the Rocky Mountain region. Its daily population averages over 1,900 inmates. County Jail programs include drug and alcohol counseling.⁵⁷
- Almost half of felony offenders on probation in Denver need treatment for substance abuse.⁵⁸
- As of June 2001, Denver residents accounted for 42% of the 3,200 drug offenders incarcerated in Colorado prisons. The drug offense incarceration rate for Denver residents (308 state drug prisoners per 100,000 residents) is more than two times the national average of 125 per 100,000 residents.⁵⁹
- Sisters In Sober Treatment Empowered in Recovery (SISTERS) Project⁶⁰
The SISTERS Project, operating at the Denver County jail, is a seven-week program for incarcerated women with substance abuse issues. The program can serve 17 women at a time, due to space limitations, and has served about 230 women over a three-year period. In addition to the standard therapy for drug and alcohol issues, the program also addresses other issues such as victimization, mental health, health, employment, and eating disorders.

Consequences of Use

- During FY 2001, the Denver Health and Hospital Authority (DHHA) spent \$35.9 million on medical care for patients with diagnoses related to smoking, drinking, and other drug abuse. DHHA also spent \$9.1 million on alcohol detoxification and methadone maintenance treatment.⁶¹
- Since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, 532 persons in Denver diagnosed with injecting drug use (IDU) related AIDS have died. 370 Denver residents with IDU-related AIDS remain alive.⁶²

- Denver's rate of new IDU-related AIDS cases is twice that of the U.S. rate and nearly five times higher than the rest of Colorado.⁶³
- From 2000 to 2001, the number of cocaine and crack related calls to the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center more than doubled (from 59 calls in 2000 to 127 calls in 2001).⁶⁴
- In 2001, there were 36 heroin-related calls to the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center compared to 21 calls in 1995.⁶⁵
- Amphetamine related calls to the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center increased dramatically from 1994 (36 calls) to 2001 (581 calls).⁶⁶
- From 1994 to 1998, the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center received one or two calls a year relating to marijuana. In 1999, the Poison Center received 47. The increase in marijuana related calls continued in 2001 with 97 calls.⁶⁷
- Marijuana emergency department (ED) mentions in Denver increased from 677 in 1999 to 979 in 2001. Preliminary data show that there were 423 marijuana-related ED mentions reported to the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) from January to June 2002.⁶⁸

Number of ED Drug Mentions, Selected Drugs, Denver, 1999-June 2002

Selected Drugs	Full Year 1999	Full Year 2000	Full Year 2001	Jan-June 2002
Alcohol in combination	1,710	1,758	1,875	991
Cocaine	1,382	1,342	1,343	926
Heroin	629	666	769	519
Marijuana	677	817	979	423
Amphetamines	235	334	406	256
Methamphetamine	101	110	98	63
MDMA	15	57	42	20
Ketamine	1	12	11	0
LSD	87	64	43	--
PCP	--	7	7	0
Miscellaneous hallucinogens	27	15	32	4
Rohypnol	0	0	1	0
GHB	71	43	16	13
Inhalants	32	41	35	39
Combinations not tabulated above	--	--	9	--
Total drug abuse episodes	4,815	4,944	5,468	3,003
Total drug abuse mentions	8,226	8,561	9,412	5,017

- During 2001, there were 310 drug-related deaths reported to DAWN by Medical Examiners (ME) in the Denver metropolitan area (includes Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties).⁶⁹

Number of Drug Deaths and Drug Mentions, Denver Metropolitan Area, 1997-2001

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Alcohol in combination	49	61	74	75	99
Cocaine	56	66	82	80	126
Heroin/morphine	53	51	79	66	77
Marijuana	4	3	20	20	31
Amphetamines	5	3	5	9	8
Methamphetamine	6	3	8	10	19
Club drugs	--	--	--	2	4
Hallucinogens	--	--	--	1	--
Inhalants	1	2	--	1	--
Narcotic analgesics	38	40	71	64	106
Other analgesics	4	6	4	16	22
Benzodiazepines	11	11	39	28	55
Antidepressants	18	25	33	37	38
All other substances	20	27	37	68	79
Total drug deaths	154	164	236	242	310
Total drug mentions	265	298	452	477	664

- In Denver County, medical examiners reported a total of 147 drug-related deaths in 2001.⁷⁰

Number of ME Drug Mentions, Denver County, 1997-2001

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Alcohol in combination	36	42	52	45	67
Cocaine	40	45	56	57	78
Heroin/morphine	42	35	63	40	52
Marijuana	--	--	--	--	1
Amphetamines	1	1	3	6	7
Methamphetamine	1	1	5	4	11
Club drugs	--	--	--	1	1
Hallucinogens	--	--	--	1	--
Inhalants	--	1	--	--	--
Narcotic analgesics	20	8	28	29	35
Other analgesics	2	3	2	5	3
Benzodiazepines	2	2	16	14	18
Antidepressants	14	14	15	14	11
All other substances	4	11	12	23	12
Total drug deaths	84	84	135	123	147
Total drug mentions	162	163	252	239	296

Treatment

- As of March 2001, there were 42 licensed treatment programs/facilities in Denver.⁷¹
- From September 2000 to September 2001 there were 3,568 calls to substance abuse referral services.⁷²

- As of March 2001 there were 2,600 people in publicly funded treatment and an average of 118 people waiting for publicly funded treatment.⁷³
- Between 45,000 to 60,000 Denver residents age 12 and older are estimated to need treatment for substance abuse and addiction.⁷⁴
- Of the 6,117 treatment admissions in Denver during the first six months of 2001, 40.4% were for marijuana.⁷⁵

Treatment Admissions, Denver, 1996-2001*

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001*
Nnumber of admissions	12,988	11,754	14,294	14,450	13,046	6,117
Heroin	15.1%	13.7%	13.2%	14.3%	14.5%	12.1%
Non-Rx methadone	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Other opiates	2.2%	2.2%	2.3%	2.7%	3.2%	3.7%
Methamphetamine	8.9%	14.9%	13.5%	10.7%	13.0%	14.8%
Other stimulants	8.9%	14.9%	13.5%	10.7%	13.0%	14.8%
Cocaine	30.6%	27.1%	26.6%	23.6%	21.2%	21.3%
Marijuana	38.8%	37.9%	39.8%	43.7%	42.4%	40.4%
Hallucinogens	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%
Barbiturates	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%
Sedatives	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
Tranquilizers	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.9%	0.6%	0.6%
Inhalants	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%
Other	0.7%	0.7%	1.2%	1.1%	1.7%	3.8%

* Treatment admissions data for 2001 are for the first 6 months only.

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